

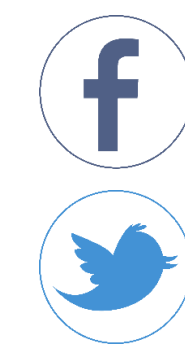


ESIPP

EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH
POSITIVE PARENTING



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Project ESIPP
ESIPP_Europe

DEVELOPING PARENT EDUCATION IN AUTISM IN SOUTH-EAST EUROPE: THE ESIPP PROJECT

D. Preece¹, E. Theodorou², K. Mavrou², J. Stošić³, J. Troshanska⁴, L. Symeou², J. Frey Škrinjar³, V. Trajkovski⁴, P. Bramble¹, A. Baranger,⁵
C. Fernández⁵, R. Fortuna⁶, A. Capper⁶, A. Ružić⁷, S. Aguila-Muñoz⁷, N. Charalambous-Darden⁸, A. Winstanley⁸ & J. Hardcastle⁹.

1. Faculty of Education and Humanities, University of Northampton, United Kingdom.
2. European University Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus.
3. Department of Inclusive Education and Rehabilitation, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia.
4. Macedonian Scientific Society for Autism, Skopje, FYR of Macedonia.
5. Autism Europe, Brussels, Belgium.
6. Target Autism, Northamptonshire, UK.
7. Centre for Autism, Zagreb, Croatia
8. AASP Centre, Limassol, Cyprus.
9. Autism Concern, Northamptonshire, UK

RATIONALE

- Autism challenges traditional parenting styles, and can make parents feel deskilled and disempowered, especially where little information or support is available.
- Providing accurate information about autism to parents and teaching them to adapt their parenting style and approach using good autism practice has been shown to be effective in improving personal, educational and social outcomes for individuals with autism and their families.
- However, such support is extremely limited or non-existent within many areas of the world, including some countries in south-east Europe.

THE PROJECT

- To address this issue, a three-year project was established, bringing together a partnership of academics, teachers, parents and non-governmental organisations, under the leadership of the University of Northampton.
- The project, running from September 2015 to August 2018, was co-funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ programme.
- The aim of the project was to provide parent education to families living with autism, free of charge to participants, in areas where such support was otherwise unavailable or difficult to access

OBJECTIVES

- To develop a core parent autism education curriculum and locally appropriate parent education materials and methods.
- To provide parent education in three diverse south-eastern European countries – Croatia, Cyprus and the FYR of Macedonia (now the Republic of North Macedonia) – where diagnosis and service provision are emergent.
- To develop local parent education teams within these countries to ensure sustainability.
- To evaluate the impact of the parent education events upon families attending.
- To share the results of the project with stakeholders, and to make policy recommendations regarding providing parent education around Europe.

THE PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

- An initial literature review (Preece & Trajkovski 2017) and a survey of parents in the three countries (Preece *et al.* 2017) were undertaken to evaluate potential models and content and to identify parental priorities regarding both content and delivery.
- As a result of this activity, a 12-hour parent education programme and locally differentiated training materials were developed for use in the three countries.
- The content of the programme (freely downloadable from the ESIPP website) focused on six areas:
 1. Introduction to autism
 2. Practical strategies to manage behaviour through visual structure
 3. Managing sensory sensitivities
 4. Exploring communication
 5. Positive approaches to social development and interaction
 6. Understanding and managing challenging behavior

- Workshops were held in 11 locations across the three countries:
 - Croatia: Zagreb, Rijeka, Osijek, Split
 - Cyprus: Limassol, Nicosia
 - FYR of Macedonia: Skopje, Veles, Bitola, Ohrid, Debar.

EVALUATION

- A combined process and outcome mixed methods evaluation methodology (Royse *et al.* 2009) was used to evaluate the project.
- Data were gathered via:
 - Pre-attendance, post-attendance and follow-up (3-month) parent questionnaires – incorporating the CarerQoL quality of life scale (Hoefman *et al.* 2014) – from parents attending workshops
 - Semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of parents from each cohort
 - Trainer focus groups and reflective diaries
 - Feedback from stakeholder conferences in the three countries

RESULTS

- Quantitative data identified that:
 - Almost 90% of parents surveyed across the three countries wished to receive parent education
 - 84% of responding parents (n=152) benefited from learning practical strategies to use at home
 - 79% felt they had a good understanding of autism after attending the workshop
 - 73% could better understand and predict their child's behaviour
 - >70% reported improved child communication;
 - Carer QoL data indicate increased parental happiness following attendance (p=.001).
- Qualitative data identified:
 - The positive impact of attending the parent education programme on family life
 - Increased awareness regarding sensory and communication issues
 - Parents also reported that attendance provided opportunities to meet other parents and reduced social isolation.
- As a result of the ESIPP project, teams of local trainers have been developed in all three countries, and ESIPP parent education is continuing to be provided to families in these three countries (and beyond).

CONCLUSIONS

- Data identify that parents who have attended the parent education programme found it beneficial, and that it had a positive impact on their family life.
- Key areas of impact have been improvements in communication and improved management of sensory and behavioural issues.
- This supports the continued and wider provision of parent education within and beyond Europe.

MORE INFO



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info@esipp.eu



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